Chinese Doctrines as Strategic Culture: Assessing their Effects

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Introduction

Culture substantially shapes peoples' understanding of the world. Perception about international security issues is no exception. Reality is rarely objectively observable, and indeed, in issues of national security, opacity is not only inadvertent but is often deliberately created. In such an issue-area, the propensity for even small biases to play a large role in shaping beliefs should be large.

A large number of scholars, many of whom are involved in this project, have productively examined the role of culture in the study of national security affairs. In particular, the study of Chinese foreign policy has benefited from this approach significantly over the years, ranging from Alan Whiting's early work to the contemporary work of Andrew Scobell and Arthur Waldron.

This paper—drawing extensively on an 'in progress' book manuscript[1]—takes a different approach, focusing quite narrowly on one specific set of ideational factors: military doctrine. In particular, I evaluate the effects that Chinese military doctrine had in 1950 in shaping Chinese perceptions about American policy and signaling at the time in two different strategic geographies. In short, I argue that Chinese doctrine shaped Beijing's perceptions of Washington in ways that the balance of power between the two does not satisfactorily explain.

This paper attempts to make use of the self-conscious attention to positivist rigor that characterizes more recent scholarship on strategic culture.[2] However, it focuses on a narrower form of strategic culture than many other works. Johnston centers his definition of the term on beliefs regarding "the role of and efficacy of military forces in interstate political affairs."[3] As will be clear below, the independent variable of this paper, doctrine or "theory of victory," is used to describe beliefs at a different level, one closer to the operational art of military strategies and tactics. The usage in this paper more closely accords with that referred to by Scobell as the "organizational culture" of different national militaries.[4]

This is clearly a much narrower form of "strategic culture" than that many other scholars find useful to study. Nevertheless, I think it is an important contribution to the literature for several reasons:

1. First, I think the effects shown here are very clearly apparent in the historical record, not just for China but also for the United States and many other states.[5] Accordance with empirical reality must be the first criterion for assessing the utility of any theoretical construct.
2. Second, I think such a narrow focus eases the task for objective coding of the cultural factor in question (military doctrine) and avoiding the critiques of circular reasoning and tautology that are often levied against similar arguments. That is, this work focuses on an aspect of culture that is clearly measurable in isolation from the effects it has on international behavior. Military doctrine is relatively easy to observe, even in closed societies like 1950s' China.
3. Third, military doctrine is often relatively homogeneous. That is, there are rarely (although sometimes) multiple competing military doctrines within a single military organization. For training, procurement, and planning purposes it is important to have a relatively unified doctrine. This reduces the problems—faced by many other authors working on strategic culture—of multiple, competing cultural strands implying different lessons for perspectives on security.

As a final introductory aside, the bane of any cultural argument in the study of politics is separating out the effect of material factors from those of a more ideational nature. This paper makes every effort to do this by highlighting deviations between doctrinal cultural shaped perceptions and reality—sometimes as manifested in military combat (an ultimate arbiter if there ever was one).

The rest of this paper will proceed as follows:

1. First, a brief definition of terms will be offered and the theoretic predictions made explicit.
2. Second, two cases of Chinese military statecraft from 1950 will be presented.
3. Third, I go on to sketch out current Chinese doctrine and tentatively project the similar sorts of misperceptions that might lead to today.
4. Finally, some notional conclusions will be offered.

Hypothesis and Definitions

This section first lays out an explicit definition of "doctrine" and where it comes from, and explains what implications come from viewing it as a form of culture.

Doctrines and Theories of Victory

Building on the usage of Posen[6] and others[7], this paper defines a "theory of victory" as a belief about what constitutes effective military power at a fundamental level and how it should be used operationally and tactically. It includes—indeed, is centered on—doctrine, but also consists of the make up of military forces as well as some elements of grand strategy. It is a blanket term to describe a generic understanding of how to win wars. It is a mental construct, albeit one that is often informed by past empirical experience and one that clearly has tangible effects on policy.

This paper does not explain the *sources* of different theories of victory but rather their *effects*. That said, I recognize there is a large literature that is relevant here emphasizing the importance of systemic and geographic imperative[8], technology,[9] past historic practice,[10] and organizational structures and practice.[11] Here is it important to highlight that to the extent that the first two (systemic and geographic factors as well as technology) are of primary importance— and to the extent that doctrine shifts smoothly in response to changes in either of those—then thinking of doctrine as a culture with independent explanatory power does not make sense. Rather, in those cases, doctrine would simply be a representation of underlying material factors. However, the bulk of the studies of doctrine have emphasized the latter two factors of historic and

organizational practices. Thus, it is appropriate to focus on doctrine as a form of organizational culture, and of course, it is one that speaks to strategic issues directly.

Predictions about the Importance of Doctrine

If we view doctrine as a form of culture, then it as with any culture*,* can shape perceptions in critical ways.[12] By creating norms and expected patterns of behavior, culture profoundly shapes one's understanding of reality. At a very fundamental level, "culture refers both to a set of evaluative standards, such as norms or values, and to cognitive standards, such as rules or models defining what entities and actors exist in a system and how they operate and interrelate."[13] Military cultures are known to have important effects on grand strategic preferences.[14] Theories of victory are a sort of military strategic and doctrinal culture, and thus are likely to have their own effects on perceptions of power and signals.

Regardless of its sources, the effects of the choice of a particular doctrine are wide-ranging. Future force procurement decisions will be made based on that decision. Training is geared to implement it (even at senior levels of the military). Political leaders will also be educated in it by the military leadership. Further, once incorporated into a nation's doctrine, these beliefs are often applied to unexpected situations through the creation of standard operating procedures that are relatively inflexible yet widely applied.[15] Indeed, while military doctrine is necessary in order to rehearse and plan, once accepted it reinforces a belief system about its own efficacy.[16] This inflexibility of doctrine, coupled with its application to a wide range of policies and issues, emphasizes the importance of this ideational factor as a variable in and of itself.

The use of military signals or statecraft to communicate regarding interests and capabilities often characterizes crisis diplomacy. I predict that the interpretation of the other side's signals in international crises will be heavily shaped by a state's own military doctrine. *When a state interprets an adversary's signal, it will do so by evaluating it through the lens of its own military doctrine.* When a nation's doctrine deviates from or oversimplifies reality as given by the military technology at the time, this interpretation will differ from that implied by the material (and technological) conditions themselves. These perceptions—or often misperceptions—are important in the conduct of international diplomacy. If states do not understand the distribution of power and the degree of adversary intent, inadvertent escalation and unnecessary military conflict are likely. In cases where combat is joined, we should see reality crashing into the blurred doctrinal lenses and shattering them.

The paper now turns to two broad historical cases to probe the plausibility of the hypothesis.

China's Army Doctrine in 1950 and its Effects

The first case examines Chinese doctrine as it pertained to ground combat and goes on to assess the degree to which it served as a cultural lens shaping Beijing's perception of Washington in the summer and fall of 1950 as the Korean War escalated. Strong evidence is provided for the hypothesis proposed in the paper: Chinese doctrine leads to gross misperceptions about the degree of American intent and the effectiveness of American capabilities.

Characterizing the Doctrine

In 1950, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had just emerged victorious from two decades of civil war and a seven-year fight against Japan. These experiences left it with a robust set of strategic beliefs that it incorporated into its theory of victory: Mao downplayed the importance of nuclear weapons and emphasized the role of People's War and infantry forces more generally.

Mao's well-known statements that nuclear weapons were mere "paper tigers" may have contained an element of bravado, but they also represented the views of senior Chinese military leaders to a great extent. For instance, in an internal debate in July 1948, Mao and Zhou argued for the weakness and irrelevance of nuclear weapons for important global security affairs.[17] Before 1955, there had been no formal study of what atomic weapons could do against China. Only in July of that year did the top 200 leaders in the CCP finally receive a briefing on the subject. Even this was only a scant 25 pages long, covering different aspects of nuclear war, such as what the weapons could do to cities, to forces in the field, etc.[18] The words of the acting Chief of Staff during the Korean War exemplified this in September 1950: "After all, China lives on the farms. What can atom bombs do there?"[19]

A second component of Chinese doctrinal beliefs was the emphasis of People's War on morale and manpower over material. As Mao succinctly pronounced, "Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, that are decisive."[20] Mao's large, high-morale forces would be used to concentrate large numbers of forces to overwhelm or annihilate entire enemy units. He wrote:

In every battle concentrate an absolutely superior force (two, three, four, and sometimes even five or six times the enemy's strength), encircle the enemy forces completely, strive to wipe them out thoroughly, and do not let any escape from the net.[21]

Whitson and Huang's *The Chinese High Command*, a definitive survey of the PLA, suggests that this particular pronouncement represented not only Mao's strategic thought, but a consensus of the senior military leadership at the time.[22] This strategy had been used many times with great success during the civil war.[23] The west referred to it as a "human wave" or "human sea" tactic.[24]

These doctrines were not just theoretical for the Chinese but were put into practice throughout the military. In terms of capabilities, the PLA was an exceptionally large, under-equipped force. One military analyst writes:

In terms of equipment, the Chinese Communist Army of 1950 was primitive by any standards. It has been compared to an army of 1914, without the trucks and the artillery, primarily an army of infantrymen. There were few trucks, little artillery, very limited communication (particularly via radio), no air support, and no antiaircraft defense. Logistical support in the civil war had been provided by the local population.[25]

The PLA's doctrinal and strategic beliefs had many sources. Many of these elements can be pulled out of Sun Tsu and other sources of classical military thought in Chinese history.[26] More importantly, recent history reified these ancient themes. Many of these strategies had stood them in good stead against the better-armed and better-equipped KMT in the civil war.[27] These cultural views remained dominant in the PLA for years to come.

China's Army Doctrine Shapes its Perceptions

When engaging in military statecraft with the United States in 1950, Chinese doctrine pervaded its perceptions. There is substantial evidence that the Chinese had a deep confidence that their doctrine would be effective against the American forces. For instance, a detailed assessment made by field commanders from late September 1950 makes apparent this confidence and does so by explicitly analyzing the situation using the doctrinal lens one would expect from a belief in People's War. The following summary of that report, with a number of direct quotations from the actual document, merits reprinting at length:

1. First, the U.S. forces were politically unmotivated because "they are invading other people's country, fighting an unjust war, and thus encountering opposition not only from the American but other peace-loving peoples around the world," whereas the Chinese forces would "fight against aggression, carrying on a just war, and thus will have the support of our people and other peace-loving peoples; and more important our troops have a stronger political consciousness and higher combat spirit."
2. Second, the U.S. troops were inferior in terms of combat effectiveness, because, "although they have excellent modern equipment, their officers and soldiers are not adept in night battles, close combat, and bayonet charges." By contrast, the CCP troops "have had rich experience over the past ten years in fighting an enemy of modern equipment …and are good at close combat, night battles, mountainous assaults, and bayonets charges."
3. Thirst, the U.S. forces were not tactically flexible, since "American soldiers always confine themselves to the bounds of military codes and regulations, and their tactics are dull and mechanical." On the other hand, the CCP forces were "good at maneuvering flexibility and mobility and, in particular, good at surrounding and attacking enemy's flanks by taking tortuous courses, as well as dispersing and concealing [our own] forces."
4. Fourth, American soldiers were not capable of enduring hardship. "They are afraid of dying and merely relying on firepower [in combat, while] … on the contrary our soldiers are brave and willing to sacrifice life and blood and capable of bearing hardship and heavy burdens," attributes that would remedy the disadvantage of inferior firepower.
5. Finally, the U.S. forces had greater logistical problems. The U.S. was "carrying on a war across the [Pacific] Ocean and has to ship most of the necessities from the American continent—even if it can use supply bases in Japan, [for instance] it is transporting drinking water from Japan—and therefore its supply lines are much longer, eventually making it difficult for them to reinforce manpower and supplies." Meanwhile, the Chinese would be close the rear bases and "back by [their] fatherland." The organization of supplies would also be much easier; because "we have less trucks and artillery, we won't consume that much gasoline and ammunition."[28]

In this passage, note in particular the references to U.S. military weakness due to numbers of troops, long supply lines, tactical inflexibility, lack of appropriate political motivation, and the dismissal of nuclear weapons. Conversely, the Chinese side was thought to benefit from the justness of its cause, their ability to move on foot, their aptitude for hand-to-hand fighting, and their light logistics tail. The Chinese military doctrinal lens clearly shaped both those perspectives.

Other instances of relative Chinese confidence abound. One of Mao's generals later wrote of the perceptions at the time:

During the past several decades, our army had always defeated well-equipped enemies with our poor arms. Our troops were skillful in close fighting, night combat, mountain operations, and bayonet charges. Even though the American army had modern weapons and advanced equipment, its commanders and soldiers were not familiar with close fighting, night combat, and bayonet charges.[29]

The Chinese expected bayonet charges to play a large role in the *hypothetical* next war; the United States thought that in general strategic bombing and nuclear exchanges would be central. Again, this is precisely what the hypothesis would predict: Each side should believe that factors emphasized by their own theory of victory would dominate in battles.

A second element of China's confidence in their forces' ability to fight the Americans came on the issue of nuclear weapons. Once the Korean War broke out, a wide range of Chinese leaders continued to express confidence in their ability to address this potential threat. As the two sides were edging toward conflict, the United States sent a number of subtle nuclear threats.[30] However, these threats by no means cowed the Chinese. At a meeting of the commanders at

divisional level and above of the Northeast Military Region on August 13, 1950, one senior participant recalled that the military leaders relied on international popular opposition to prevent the United States from using the weapons:

We then explicitly assessed the factor of nuclear weapons and concluded that it was men, not one or two atomic bombs, that determined the outcome of war. And an atomic bomb use on the battlefield would inflict damage not only on the enemy's side but also on friendly forces. Furthermore, the people of the world opposed the use of nuclear weapons; the United States would have to think twice before dropping them.[31]

Such thinking seems more appropriate for pacifist idealists and political propagandists than for hard-nose military line unit commanders. Internal briefing papers were making similar points in November:

The atomic bomb itself cannot be the decisive factor in a war … the atomic bomb has many drawbacks as a military weapon … it can only be used against a big and concentrated object like a big armament industry center or huge concentration of troops. Therefore, the more extensive the opponents' territory is and the more scattered the opponents' population is, the less effective will the atomic bomb be.[32]

A later discussion held by operational military commanders toward the end of the war was similarly Panglossian and simplified.[33]

Chinese (Doctrinally Shaped) Perceptions Proven Wrong

All of this might be explained away as a set of accurate perceptions given the strategic realities that China faced at the time. However, after the United States joined the conventional battle, a number of instances when the Chinese express surprise suggest that their perceptions were indeed "misperceptions." The shock shown at all levels—tactical, operational, and strategic—in China comes up repeatedly and strongly in the historic record.

The Chinese soon found that the difficulties in surrounding and wiping out large enemy units—the primary operational doctrine for the PLA—were pronounced. American tactical mobility and the substantial firepower available even to small American units caused these problems for the Chinese.[34] Once the U.S. forces had been found and fixed, the Chinese forces still had trouble destroying them (which they had been able to do against similarly engaged Japanese or KMT forces). "Luring them in deep" was not effective when "they" could then set up hasty, but strong, defensive positions from which they could easily hold off the ill-equipped Chinese forces.[35] Peng Dehuai summarized the wide scope of problems that the Chinese forces faced at the end of the Third Campaign, in early January 1951:

By now the Chinese People's Volunteers had fought three major campaigns in a row in severe winter after their entry into Korea three months before. They had neither an air force nor sufficient anti-aircraft guns to protect them from enemy bombers. Bombed by aircraft and shelled by long-range guns day and night, our troops could not move about in the daytime. And they had not had a single day's good rest in three months. It is easy to imagine how tired they were. As our supply lines had now been extended, it was very difficult to get provisions. The strength of our forces had been reduced by nearly 50 percent due to combat and non-combat losses. Our troops badly need reinforcements and rest and reorganization before they could go into battle again.[36]

The PLA had not expected to face such a capable military, as the paper's hypothesis would predict. *This provides powerful evidence that in this case the ideational factors were sharply at odds with the material ones.*

China 's Navy Doctrine in 1950 and its Effects

Amphibious operations in the same period present a different sort of case to examine through the lens of doctrine as strategic culture. In this case, the misperceptions relative to an objective reality are less sharp, but nonetheless the study emphasizes the close linkage between doctrine and perception.

Characterizing the Doctrine

In contrast to the backward PLA ground force (that is, the Army *per se*), for idiosyncratic reasons the Chinese Navy was relatively modern. The People's Liberation Army Navy (the PLAN), as it was officially known, was relatively professionalized and technically advanced, at least in comparison to the PLA ground force. There were two main sources for the leaders in this service: graduates of Soviet training academies and KMT defectors. Many of the defectors had even been trained in the West, underscoring their familiarity with the American way of war. These former KMT officers were well versed in modern amphibious operations, and provided a core of expertise for the PLAN to refine. The Nationalist Navy had conducted unopposed amphibious landings numerous times, including a major operation in August 1947.[37] As the civil war turned against the Nationalists, their navy conducted a series of amphibious extractions, often while the ground element was under attack, a particularly challenging tactical situation.[38]

Beyond these background conditions, the Chinese communist leadership had recently learned quite a bit in this area against a relatively advanced foe. Its attempts to conquer the small coastal islands of Jinmen, Zhoushan, and Dengbu in late 1949 had led to abysmal defeats. These setbacks taught the Chinese many doctrinal lessons about the conduct of such landings.[39] For instance, they began to focus on providing the troops with specialized training for amphibious landings, something prior Chinese operations had lacked. Soon they would be using translated U.S. Marine amphibious warfare manuals.[40] At this point, the Chinese communists were using regular Army divisions rather than dedicated marines, just as the United States had occasionally done in WWII.[41] From their prior defeats, "they again learned that without the support of regular navy ships, landing operations by small boats could be disastrous."[42] They prepared to remedy this problem as well. Further, these defeats had also emphasized the importance of follow-on logistics support.[43] There, the key lesson of the importance of controlling the sea to prevent the opposing navy from attacking or reinforcing was emphasized.[44]

Over time, the PLA had internalized many of the lessons from these earlier campaigns. The diligence and dedication following their earlier defeats allowed them to win a resounding victory on Hainan against a substantial and determined KMT force including a significant naval squadron. As the Chinese looked forward to the invasion of Taiwan, they recognized "victory would depend on cooperative operations of the three services."[45] They also knew they could draw on units that were now experienced in conducting successful amphibious assaults against an opposed coastline.[46]

The Effects of China's Naval Doctrine

This naval doctrine is relevant to the Chinese decision to postpone their plan to invade Taiwan following the American declaration of the neutralization of the Taiwan Strait by the Seventh Fleet. Separating out the material factors (i.e., the balance of forces) from the doctrinal cultural one is less clear in this case to be sure. However, in an objective military sense, the "deployment" of the Seventh Fleet was less strong that it might have appeared. For a month, there was a single show of force by a carrier and a series of air patrols. After that only a small fleet was deployed, and it was frequently pulled to Korean waters—days away from the Strait—to support the war effort there. Beyond that, U.S. military leaders repeatedly expressed concern throughout the fall that they would be unable to stop a significant Chinese attack.

There is limited information available about the Chinese interpretation of this deterrent threat. However, their response was immediate: the declaration of the deployment of the Seventh Fleet caused the Chinese to abandon their plans. Following the announcement of the 7th Fleet deployment, a number of orders were issued immediately in Beijing to push back the invasion of Taiwan. On June 30, just over two days after Truman's declaration, Zhou Enlai ordered "the date for the invasion of Taiwan to be postponed. The army should continue to demobilize, and the establishment of the air force and navy should be strengthened."[47] The formal order from the Central Military Commission to relocate troops that had previously been slated for the invasion of Taiwan was issued on July 7.[48] In early August, they were shifted northeast where they would participate in the Korean intervention.[49] Also in early August, the CMC gave its formal approval to an extended delay, postponing the invasion until after 1951.[50]

In terms of detail on *why* this decision was taken, it is clear from several other pieces of evidence that the Chinese leaders found the American threat to be both credible and *very capable*. For instance, while the 3rd Field Army had prepared hard for the invasion, the top political leadership of the PRC quickly recognized a need to abandon these plans:

However, in an internal directive, the Central Committee [of the CCP] had to admit: it [China] did not have the ability to compete with the United States in a trial of modern navies.[51]

Similarly, a tantalizing report regarding the reaction in Beijing to the American deterrent threat comes from a Chinese Nationalist agent who reportedly attended a high level meeting in Beijing. He passed on the conclusion of the senior Communist cadres, that the Chinese assault fleet would "last only a few [hours] against 7th Flt and U.S. Air Force."[52]

In both of these pieces of data, the specific dangers posed by the U.S. Navy (and in one case, the Air Force) are tied to the decision to postpone the attack. Thus, the Chinese understood that even a minimal deployment would decimate any prospects for a successful invasion. In this case, then, *the Chinese doctrine led them to emphasize the strong capabilities of their adversary, perhaps even beyond what an objective reading of the situation might have suggested.*

Chinese Doctrine Today

Taking the insights from the two case studies offered above, we can now assess the prospects that modern Chinese doctrine might shape its perceptions and thus lead to misperceptions

Characterizing Chinese Doctrine

Chinese military doctrine today is multifaceted and certainly in flux.[53] However, we might draw out a few notional strains for the purposes of this essay. The most important of these might be characterized as asymmetric doctrine, aimed at finding key vulnerabilities in American forces. Beyond that, nuclear doctrine will be discussed briefly.

Overall, American capabilities (and technology in particular) remain very substantially ahead of China's.[54] However, a number of prominent sources suggest that China is engaged in a deliberate effort to develop asymmetric strategies that might be used in a coercive manner to counter current American conventional dominance.[55] The extensive discussions of so-called Assassin's Mace (*shashou jian*) strategies and weapons most clearly exemplify this.[56]

Weapons do not determine doctrine, but they do signify priorities in Chinese doctrinal thinking. Notable among the recently obtained weapons for the PLA are the heavy missile destroyers (the 2-4 Sovremenny-class DDGs) and advanced diesel submarines (the 4-12 Kilo-class SSKs), both imported from Russia. Both of these are systems that seem designed to penetrate the defenses

of carrier battle groups that the Aegis missile defense platforms provide (Arleigh Burke-class DDGs and Ticonderoga-class CGs).[57] Similar points might be made regarding the SU-30 fighters (long range strike fighters aimed to hold at risk American carrier-based air assets) and the substantial modernization (including accuracy improvements) and build up of ballistic missiles (e.g., hundreds of M-9/11 missiles that can be used to threaten Taiwan; MaRV systems aimed to defeat American NMD systems; etc.)

All of these systems would be used in a relatively tactically offensive manner, attacking what are perceived to be key centers of gravity for America (and in some cases Taiwan). In most cases, the use of such systems would have to be conceived of in coercive terms: the threat of their existence will lead to their utility in deterring U.S. involvement.[58] This might be contrasted with a strategy aimed at more completely defeating a potential adversary (which the PLA recognizes would be beyond its means).

On the nuclear side, China is clearly undergoing substantial modernization of both its missiles and warheads.[59] This currently includes the development of road-mobile, solid-fueled ICBMs far less vulnerable to a "bolt from the blue" first strike than the currently fielded systems. Additionally, and further out in the future, the Chinese are developing a more reliable SSBN (the so-called Type-94 project) and associated long-range, sea-launched, ballistic missiles. Nevertheless, the core doctrine underlying China's force posture has remained fairly consistent: minimum deterrence.[60] This is generally described as a retaliatory, no-first use doctrine that aims solely to deter nuclear attack on China and a belief that small numbers of deliverable warheads are sufficient for this task. According to Senior Colonel Yao Yunzhu of the Academy of Military Sciences:

Chinese strategists take the concept [of minimum deterrence] as a relative one, defined not only by pure numbers, but more importantly by such key criteria as invulnerability of nuclear forces, assurance of retaliation, and credibility of counter-attack. When a Chinese document says that China intends to possess nuclear weapons only at the minimum (or lowest) level for the needs of self-defense, that means to have the minimum but assured capabilities for a retaliatory second strike.[61]

That is, given a degree of reliability in the security of a second strike, the overall size of the arsenal (critical for most warfighting doctrines) need not be increased.

Prospects for Misperceptions Due to Modern Doctrinal Culture

Extrapolating the lessons of the first two cases forward to today, what do these two facets of current Chinese doctrine imply for the ability of Beijing to evaluate signals from the United States and the overall balance of power? In both the conventional and nuclear arenas, the Chinese doctrine is substantially different from that of the United States. This will make it rather challenging for the Chinese to correctly interpret American signals.

For asymmetric "Assassin's Mace" strategies, the "asymmetry" is explicitly defined relative to the U.S. strategy. Thus, by definition it is a doctrine (or theory of victory) very different from that of the United States. This will have the effect of making communication of military threats more difficult for both sides. Washington deploys force and projects power by fielding well rounded, balanced forces whose aim it is to dominate a particular region for a sustained period, rather than getting off a few quick devastating strikes to deter an adversary from continuing a course of action. This is a pronounced contrast with the Chinese view as characterized above.

One important mitigating factor in this arena is the very focus in the development of Chinese asymmetric strategies on contingencies for use against American forces. This might reduce the challenges posed by such large doctrinal differences. That said, a doctrinal culture is likely to

emerge and harden over time, leading to excessive confidence in the strategies practiced and employed by the PLA. This will make the conduct of military statecraft more challenging.

While there is significant evidence that the Chinese did find the American deployment of carrier battle groups to the Taiwan Strait region in 1995/96 to be a strong signal,[62] the evidence is not entirely clear, with many characterizing Beijing's view of the crisis overall as "successful" from its perspective.[63] Regardless of which of these views is correct, the shifts in Chinese doctrine described in the previous section are precisely in response to that crisis, and thus followed it. It will be in the future that larger misperceptions should occur.

Nuclear issues likely present a similar set of issues. As American doctrine continues to evolve along the lines implied in the Nuclear Posture Review, the potential for nuclear forces to be more integrated with conventional forces seems likely.[64] Given the Chinese doctrinal view on the limited tactical utility of such weapons, they are not likely to understand the enhancements to capability that such weapons might provide for U.S. military forces.

The dangers here are that Washington and Beijing will not understand the overall balance of power and the degree of intent communicated by military signals when the other side's doctrinal culture or theory of victory is different from its own.

Implications

This paper has shown that narrow views of strategic culture—here examined as military doctrine—can contribute to our understanding of important events in international politics even beyond what we can explain through an analysis of military capabilities alone. The role of Chinese over-optimism in the first case is critical to the development of the Korean War. In contrast, the degree of realism that comes from less radical doctrine in the naval case from 1950 leads to an important "dog that did not bark" in the avoidance of war in the Taiwan Strait. The description of Chinese doctrine today suggests we should be concerned about several misperceptions and that Washington needs to carefully tailor its signaling with that in mind.

This paper's conclusions are particularly relevant today for two reasons. First, in the context of the ongoing military transformation or revolution in military affairs (RMA), it is likely that major militaries in the world today will face off with radically different doctrines. The U.S. theory of victory increasingly emphasizes a number of exotic technologies: precision guided munitions, space-based intelligence gathering, electronic warfare, information warfare, stealth, heavy strategic bombers, standoff weaponry, "total battlespace awareness," and systems integration. However, when the United States sends deterrent or compellent signals relying on the threat or actual use of this sort of military power, it should avoid assuming that its adversaries will view American forces as Washington does.

Many students of strategic coercion preach similar general lessons to those that this paper counsels.[65] For instance, Keith Payne's recent examination of deterrence policy with the post-Cold War era in mind concludes:

That solution [to the problems posed by post-Cold War deterrence] is to examine as closely as possible the particular opponent's thinking—its beliefs and thought filters—to better anticipate its likely behavior in response to U.S. deterrence policies, and structure those policies accordingly.[66]

However, the existing work on "putting yourself in your adversary's shoes" generally focuses on considering his national interests. How important is a specific piece of territory to him? Would a particular concession be difficult to make? This project points out that this is insufficient. This paper contributes to the points made on mirror imaging in general by providing specific evidence

of this phenomenon, locating it in one very important issue-area, and explaining why it occurs by making explicit its causal mechanism. Policymakers need to understand how their adversary assesses power, which requires understanding the cultural perspective provided by his military doctrines, his theory of victory.

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5. My book manuscript will develop several from the Middle East at length and notes a series of examples from the combatants in the second world war. Twomey, *The Military Lens.*

6. Barry R. Posen, "Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment," *International Security* 9, no. 3 (1984/85): 51.

7. The earliest citation this author is aware of is Colin S. Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory," *International Security* 4, no. 1 (1979). However, Gray is never explicit about what he means by the term, although clearly there is some broader element of integration of political goals in his version of the concept. (Thus, Gray's version has some similarities with Posen's "grand strategy." Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 13. Rosen is more explicit in Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 20. There he defines a theory of victory as "an explanation of what the next war will look like and how officers must fight if it is to be won."

8. The most famous argument about when this occurs is: Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. Also see John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Sten Rynning, "Shaping Military Doctrine in France: Decisionmakers between International Power and Domestic Interests," Security Studies 11, no. 2 (2001/2); Colin Elman, "The Logic of Emulation: The Diffusion of Military Practices in the International System" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1999); João Resende-Santos, "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military

Systems: Military Organization and Technology in South America, 1870-1930," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996).

9. For a forceful statement on the role of technology in fomenting innovation, see Martin L. Van Creveld, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. To the Present*, Revised and Expanded ed. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991). For a broader look at the impact of technology, see William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982). For a contrary view, arguing against any deterministic role for technology in military affairs, see Keir A. Lieber, "Grasping the Technological Peace: The Offense-Defense Balance and International Security," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000).

10. Among others, see Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1990).

11. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; Elman, "The Logic of Emulation," Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Deborah D. Avant, "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War," *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000); Harvey M. Sapolsky, "On the Theory of Military Innovation," *Breakthroughs* 9, no. 1 (2000); Owen Reid Cote, Jr., "The Politics of Innovative Military Doctrine: The United States Navy and Fleet Ballistic Missiles" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996); Harvey M. Sapolsky, *The Polaris System Development: Bureaucratic and Programmatic Success in Government* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), Rosen, *Winning the Next War;* Eugene Gholz, "Systems Integration in the U.S. Defense Industry: Who Does It and Why Is It Important?," in Andrea Prencipe, Andrew Davies, and Mike Hobday eds., *The Business of Systems Integration* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996).

12. See Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 186-88, in particular, Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), especially "Chapter 5: The Self-Defense Forces and External Security;" Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992), Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 359-71.

13. Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identities, and Culture in National Security," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 56.

14. Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).

15. The classic statements on the role of standard operating procedures in foreign policy are: Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston,: Little Brown, 1971), Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (1969).

16. In addition to the discussion on the difficulties of innovation in the literatures cited above, Smith also discusses the rigidity and persistence of doctrine. Perry M. Smith, "The Role of Doctrine," in John E. Endicott and Roy W. Stafford, Jr., eds., *American Defense Policy* (Baltimore, Mary.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

17. Mark A. Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes toward Nuclear Weapons: China and the United States During the Korean War* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), 20.

18. Interview with Shen Zhihua, Beijing, September 2002. Shen is one of only a few historians of Chinese foreign policy outside the government and government-controlled research centers who has access to the Chinese archives.

19. Quoted in Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 100. The original source is Panikkar's autobiography.

20. Mao Tsetung, "On Protracted War [May 1938]," in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 219.

21. Mao Tsetung, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks [December 25, 1947]," in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 349. On the importance of this document to Maoist thought, see William W. Whitson and Zhenxia Huang, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927-71*, Praeger Library of Chinese Affairs (New York, NY: Praeger, 1973), 492.

22. Whitson and Huang, *Ibid.*, 492.

23. For examples, see Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949, Modern Wars in Perspective* (London; New York: Longman, 1995), Dick Wilson, *China's Revolutionary War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

24. Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949-1964* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 11.

25. Patrick C. Roe, *The Dragon Strikes: China and the Korean War, June-December 1950* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 2000), 417.

26. Although, as with many classic strategic texts, there are many different lessons that could be drawn from Sun Tsu. Chen-Ya Tien, *Chinese Military History: Ancient and Modern* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1992), 212ff; Georges Tan Eng Bok, "Strategic Doctrine," in Gerald Segal and William T. Tow, eds., *Chinese Defence Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 5.

27. For Mao's view on the better equipped KMT army, and ways to overcome it, see Mao Tsetung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War [December 1936]," in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 95ff.

28. Zhang Shuguang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-53* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 76-77. The bracketed editorial clarifications are all Zhang's. Zhang's footnote does not make clear the precise date, although it is clear it comes from late September 1950.

29. Xuezhi Hong, "The CPVF's Combat and Logistics," in Li Xiaobing, Allan Reed Millett, and Yu Bin, eds., *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 115.

30. The best discussion of this can be found in Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," in Stephen Van Evera, eds., *Nuclear Diplomacy and Crisis Management* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

31. Du Ping, "Political Mobilization and Control," in Li Xiaobing, Allan Reed Millett, and Yu Bin, eds., *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 62.

32. This is a quote from the internal circulation (*neibu*) *Current Affairs Handbook* (*Shishi shouce*) on November 5, 1950. Quoted in Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes toward Nuclear Weapons*, 42. While some in the United States would make similar points at the time, the overall tenor in the United States would have been quite the opposite.

33. See Zhang Shuguang, *Op. Cit.*, 237-38.

34. See, for instance, Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal: The Autobiographical Notes of Peng Dehuai (1898-1974)*, trans. Zheng Longpu (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1984), 475.

35. Zhang Shuguang, "Command, Control, and the PLA's Offensive Campaigns in Korea, 1950-51," Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt, eds., *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 102. This was the case even for the first offensive, in October and November of 1950. Yu Bin, "What China Learned from Its "Forgotten War" In Korea," in Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt, eds., *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 128 and 130.

36. Peng Dehuai, *Op. Cit.*, 479.

37. David G. Muller, *China as a Maritime Power*, Westview Special Studies on East Asia (Epping: Bowker, 1983), 8.

38. *Ibid.*

39. ? ? ? , "? ," 1950 ? ? ? ? ? ? <<? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? >>, ? ? ? :9/1949-12/1950 (? ? :? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? 1987) ? 257 ? /Mao Zedong, "Telegram to Liu Shaoqi Approving Li Yu's [Deputy Commander of the 3rd Field Army] Proposal for the Training of Four Division for Amphibious and Related Operations," February 10, 1950, Mao Zedong's Manuscripts Since the Founding of the State (Beijing, Central Party Documents Publishers, 1987) 257; ? ? ? , "? ", 1950 ? ? ? ? ? ? ? <<? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? >>, ? ? ? : 9/1949-12/1950 (? ? :? ? ? ? ? ? ? , 1987) ? 259 ? /Mao Zedong, "Telegram to Lin Biao Approving the 43rd Army to Operate Jointly in Amphibious Crossings," February 12, 1950, in *Ibid.*, 259; ? ? ? , "? ," 1950. ? ? ? ? ? ? ? <<? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? >>, ? ? ? : 9/1949-12/1950 (? ? :? ? ? ? ? ? ? , 1987) ? 357 ? /Mao Zedong, "Telegram to Li Yu From the Central Military Committee regarding Dealing with the Zhoushan Islands after their Capture," February 10, 1950, in *Ibid.*, 357

40. Gene Z. Hanrahan, "Report on Red China's New Navy," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 79, no. 8 (1953): 853.

41. On the Chinese, see footnote 39, above. The first dedicated marine unit in the PLA was established in 1953.

42. Alexander C. Huang, "The PLA Navy at War, 1949-1999: From Coastal Defense to Distant Operations," in Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt, eds., *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 252.

43. *Ibid.*, 251.

44. Again this was central to the thinking in the United States as well: Allan Reed Millett, "Assault from the Sea: The Development of Amphibious Warfare between the Wars-the American, British, and Japanese Experiences," in Williamson Murray and Allan Reed Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51.

45. He Di, "The Last Campaign to Unify China: The CCP's Unrealized Plan to Liberate Taiwan, 1949-50," in Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt, eds., *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 80.

46. These would be the forces from the Third and Fourth Field Armies that were to be used again against Taiwan as they had against Zhoushan, Hainan, and others. Edward John Marolda, "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945-52" (Ph.D. Dissertation, The George Washington University, 1990), 159.

47. Quoted in ? ? ? ,? ? ? , ? ? <<? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? >> ? ? ? (? ? :? ? ? ? ? ? , 2001). Liao Guoliang, Li Shishun, and Xu Yan, *The Development of Mao Zedong's Military Thought (in Chinese)*, revised ed. (Beijing: The People's Liberation Army Press, 2001), 372.

48. Zhang Shuguang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, *Op. Cit.,* 59.

49. Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 132.

50. ? <<? ? ? ? ? ? ? >> Song Liansheng, *Recollections on the Korean War (in Chinese)* (Kunming: Yunnan People's Press, 2002), 204.

51. *Ibid.*, 197. The precise date of this "internal directive" is unclear from the text of Song's book, although it appears to be only a few days after June 28, 1950.

52. Marolda, "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945-52", 192. Marolda cites a message sent from the U.S. Air Attaché in Taipei to the Chief of Naval Operations on August 25, 1950 available in the MacArthur archives.

53. David L. Shambaugh, "Chapter 3: Doctrine and Training," in *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

54. Harold Brown, Joseph W. Prueher, and Adam Segal, *Chinese Military Power: Report of an Independent Task Force* (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2003).

55. Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001).Office of the Secretary of Defense, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China: Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2005).

56. Again see Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military Power of the PRC*.

57. Eric A. McVadon, Rear Admiral (U.S. Navy, Retired) *Recent Trends in China's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2005).

58. Indeed this is precisely what comes through in the discussions collected by Christensen on many of these tactics. Christensen, "Posing Problems," *Op. Cit.*

59. Lyle J. Goldstein, with Andrew S. Erickson, ed., *China's Nuclear Force Modernization* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2005).

60. Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking': The Concept of Limited Deterrence," *International Security* 20, no. 3 (1995/96).

61. Yunzhu Yao, "Chinese Nuclear Policy and the Future of Minimum Deterrence," *Strategic Insights* IV, no. 9 (2005).

62. Ross points to several pieces of evidence on this point. Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force," *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 118-121.

63. My own conversations at think-tanks in Beijing in Jan 2002 and June 2005 confirm this, as do other sources: You Ji, "Changing Leadership Consensus: The Domestic Context of War Games," in Suisheng Zhao, ed., *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995-1996 Crisis* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), Suisheng Zhao, ed., "Changing Leadership Perceptions: The Adoption of a Coercive Strategy," in *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995-1996 Crisis* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999).

64. For discussion of the ongoing debate on this, see Walter Pincus, "Pentagon May Have Doubts on Preemptive Nuclear Moves," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2005.

65. E.g., Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice*, Westview Special Studies in International Relations (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980), 66ff. See also Robert S. McNamara and Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Books, 1995), 322; Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, sixth edition (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), see chapter entitled "Diplomacy Must Look at the Political Scene from the Point of View of Other Nations." On other dangers of mirror imaging, see Les Aspin, "Misreading Intelligence," *Foreign Policy*, 43 (1981).

66. Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington, Kent.: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), xi.